



Meeting of States Parties

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Thirtieth Meeting

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Report of the thirtieth Meeting of States Parties

Addendum

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I. Introduction

1. The plenary part of the thirtieth Meeting of States Parties resumed on 9 December 2020 in the format of an in-person meeting held at United Nations Headquarters to consider the agenda items that could not be addressed during the plenary meetings held from 24 to 26 August (see [SPLOS/30/14](#)).

2. From 30 October to 7 December, meetings were conducted online and combined with exchanges of documents and written statements in order to consider pending items on the basis of a timetable and modalities proposed by the President of the thirtieth Meeting.¹ This hybrid approach had been proposed on the understanding that no decisions would be adopted prior to the in-person plenary meeting. In his letters dated 11 November and 23 November,² the President made a series of proposals concerning actions to be taken by the Meeting under the pending items.

II. Organization of work

3. The Meeting proceeded on the basis of the organization of work that had been circulated by the President through a letter dated 7 December.²

III. Credentials

4. The Meeting was informed that 93 States parties that had submitted provisional credentials for the Meeting in August 2020 (see [SPLOS/30/13](#) and [SPLOS/30/14](#), para. 17) had subsequently submitted formal credentials.

IV. Report of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea to the Meeting of States Parties

5. The President of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, Albert Hoffmann, introduced the annual report of the Tribunal for 2019 ([SPLOS/30/2](#)) in a written statement.² He provided an overview of the activities of the Tribunal and of the work carried out during its forty-seventh and forty-eighth sessions, held from 11 to 22 March and from 16 to 27 September 2019, respectively.

6. The seven judges elected in August 2020 had begun their terms of office on 1 October. On 2 October, the judges elected Albert Hoffmann as President of the Tribunal and Tomas Heidar as Vice-President, for a term of three years each. On 7 October, Neeru Chadha was elected President of the Seabed Disputes Chamber, also for a term of three years.

7. The judges also elected the Deputy Registrar of the Tribunal, Ximena Hinrichs, as Registrar of the Tribunal on 20 September 2019 and Antoine Ollivier as Deputy Registrar on 13 March 2020.

8. With regard to judicial matters, the President drew attention to the judgment on the merits in the *M/V "Norstar" Case (Panama v. Italy)* and the orders on provisional measures in the *Case concerning the detention of three Ukrainian naval vessels*

¹ See the letters dated 27 and 30 October 2020 from the President of the thirtieth Meeting addressed to States Parties regarding the timetable and modalities for the consideration of the pending items on the agenda of the thirtieth Meeting, as outlined in the annex to his letter dated 27 October, available at www.un.org/Depts/los/meeting_states_parties/thirtiethmeetingstatesparties.htm.

² Available at www.un.org/Depts/los/meeting_states_parties/thirtiethmeetingstatesparties.htm.

(*Ukraine v. Russian Federation*) and the *M/T “San Padre Pio” Case (Switzerland v. Nigeria)*. He noted that two new cases had been submitted to the Tribunal, the *Dispute concerning delimitation of the maritime boundary between Mauritius and Maldives in the Indian Ocean (Mauritius/Maldives)*, submitted to a special chamber, and the *M/T “San Padre Pio” (No. 2) Case (Switzerland/Nigeria)*, submitted to the Tribunal as a whole.

9. The President highlighted the measures taken in the light of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic to protect the health of the members and staff of the Tribunal, including shortening the forty-ninth session; allowing the majority of staff to work remotely; restricting visits to the premises; holding the fiftieth session through a combination of online and in-person meetings; and amending the Rules of the Tribunal to allow, as an exceptional measure, for public health, security or other compelling reasons, to hold meetings, hearings and readings of judgments entirely or in part by videoconferencing, a method of work inaugurated with the hearings and deliberations on the preliminary objections in the *Dispute concerning delimitation of the maritime boundary between Mauritius and Maldives in the Indian Ocean (Mauritius/Maldives)*.

10. The President also highlighted capacity-building activities of the Tribunal, including its thirteenth programme on dispute settlement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, supported by the Nippon Foundation, its internship programme and a regional workshop held in Uruguay with the assistance of the Korea Maritime Institute. Even though some of those activities had been affected by the pandemic, such as the International Foundation for the Law of the Sea summer academy, which had been cancelled, the Tribunal remained committed to providing capacity-building in future through whatever means possible.

11. In their written statements,² many delegations noted the important role that the Tribunal continued to play in the peaceful settlement of disputes relating to the law of the sea and its contribution to the strengthening of the rule of law in the oceans and the maintenance of peaceful relations among States. Delegations noted the transparency, efficiency and expertise of the Tribunal in the administration of justice. The importance of State consent and the right of States to choose means of dispute settlement were emphasized.

12. Several delegations expressed appreciation for the effective response of the Tribunal to the pandemic, including by amending its Rules and adapting its working methods to accommodate online and hybrid hearings. Several delegations welcomed the adoption of the model agreement between the Tribunal and Singapore for the provision of facilities for the Tribunal to sit or otherwise exercise its functions in Singapore.

13. Many delegations noted with appreciation the capacity-building and outreach activities of the Tribunal, including its internship programme and regional workshops, as well as a new capacity-building programme for legal advisers to enhance dispute settlement capabilities in developing countries in the law of the sea. A number of delegations referred to contributions made in that regard.

14. Several delegations addressed the election of seven judges to the Tribunal, as well as a new President and a new Registrar, and expressed their gratitude to the former President and the former Registrar for their contributions to the work of the Tribunal.

15. During the in-person meeting held on 9 December, the Meeting took note of the annual report of the Tribunal for 2019 and of the statements made under the present item (item 8). The President of the thirtieth Meeting also congratulated the President of the Tribunal on his election.

16. In addition, during the deliberations under item 14 (see sect. VIII below), the increasing recourse of States to the Tribunal as a forum for dispute settlement was welcomed. A delegation emphasized that the plenary sessions of the Meeting should address budgetary matters of the Tribunal and avoid dealing with internal aspects of its operations.

V. Information reported by the Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority

17. The Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority, Michael Lodge, provided information on the activities carried out by the Authority since the twenty-ninth Meeting, including during the pandemic, in a written statement.²

18. The Secretary-General noted that the pandemic and associated restrictions on movement posed significant challenges to the work of the Authority. The second part of the twenty-sixth session of the Authority, scheduled for July 2020, had been postponed to October, and when it was concluded that it would be impossible to hold in-person meetings in a reduced format, the Assembly and the Council had taken steps to resume their work through online means, similarly to the Meeting of States Parties, adopting a programme of work prioritizing time-sensitive agenda items to be completed before the end of 2020 and postponing all other items to 2021. The Legal and Technical Commission and the Finance Committee had completed their respective programmes of work by resorting to online meetings.

19. In that regard, the Legal and Technical Commission had updated its guidance for contractors for the assessment of the possible environmental impacts arising from exploration and made progress in its work on draft standards and guidelines for deep-sea mining operations. It had also continued to work on additional draft standards and guidelines, which would be issued for consultation in due course.

20. The Secretary-General referred to his annual report to the Assembly ([ISBA/26/A/2](#)), which contained an outline of the significant progress made by the Authority at the programmatic level and a review of the status of implementation of its strategic plan for the period 2019–2023, as well as progress reports for each organ of the Authority in relation to the key performance indicators and actions identified under the high-level action plan for the period 2019–2023 adopted by the Assembly in 2019 ([ISBA/25/A/15](#) and [ISBA/25/A/15/Corr.1](#)). Owing to the pandemic, the report would be considered in 2021.

21. The Secretary-General indicated that, as part of its mandate to promote and encourage the conduct of marine scientific research in the Area, the Authority had developed an action plan to formalize and organize its contribution to the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and that a high-level webinar had been held to present key components of the draft Action Plan, including six strategic research priorities around which the Authority would mobilize its actions.

22. The Secretary-General noted that the Assembly would consider a draft decision containing a request for the Secretary-General to develop and implement a dedicated strategy for capacity development, taking into account the outcomes of an international workshop held in February 2020 ([ISBA/26/A/7](#), annex).

23. The Secretary-General also noted that, to date, 10 States parties had deposited charts or lists of geographical coordinates of points showing the outer limit lines of the continental shelf, both up to and beyond 200 nautical miles, in accordance with article 84, paragraph 2, of the Convention.

24. The Secretary-General provided updates on the development and negotiation of the financial terms of contracts, including the financial model for polymetallic nodules, and on the status of negotiations on the draft regulations for exploitation of mineral resources in the Area. The Council had continued its consideration of the draft regulations, as recommended by the Legal and Technical Commission (ISBA/25/C/WP.1), and adopted a decision concerning working methods to advance discussions on the draft regulations (ISBA/26/C/11), including through the establishment of three informal working groups to address some of the issues identified as requiring further in-depth discussions, namely, the protection and preservation of the marine environment; inspection, compliance and enforcement; and institutional matters.

25. The Secretary-General noted that important progress had been made in the development of additional regional environmental management plans, including by launching a series of online workshops in support of the work of the Legal and Technical Commission.

26. The Secretary-General noted with concern that 49 States were still in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions, with the result that 29 per cent of the membership was potentially disqualified from the exercise of voting rights. He also noted that nine members of the Authority had not paid their assessed contributions since its establishment and that the total arrears now amounted to \$1,893,845, representing approximately 20 per cent of the budget for 2020.

27. During the exchange of written statements,² several delegations emphasized the fundamental role of the Authority in organizing, regulating and controlling mining activities in the Area on behalf and for the benefit of all humankind, and in ensuring the effective protection of the marine environment as well as of human life. Several delegations expressed appreciation for the swift, creative and result-oriented response to the pandemic and the progress that the Authority had made in its work despite such challenges.

28. Many delegations welcomed the continuing work of the Authority in developing the regulations for exploitation of mineral resources in the Area, including the establishment of three informal working groups to advance future discussions. Some delegations highlighted the need for the regulations to strike a balance between environmental protection and mineral exploitation. The role of the regulations in implementing the principle of the common heritage of humankind was also highlighted.

29. The view was expressed that the development of the regulations for exploitation should continue gradually on the basis of facts, scientific evidence and consensus. A delegation also stressed the need to complete the regulations in the shortest time possible without sacrificing their quality, noting that some contractors were nearing the end of their exploration contracts and might be looking to begin exploitation. An appeal was made to States parties to participate actively in the finalization of the regulations.

30. Several delegations commended the progress in the implementation of the strategy to develop additional regional environmental management plans, including the conduct of online workshops to inform the work of the Legal and Technical Commission in preparing its recommendations. The progress made by the Commission in updating its guidance for contractors for the assessment of the possible environmental impacts arising from exploration in the Area was also acknowledged.

31. Some delegations highlighted the capacity-building activities of the Authority and their role in promoting the participation of developing countries in the work of the Authority.

32. Several delegations stressed the importance of guaranteeing resources for the Authority to continue its work effectively, noting with concern the number of parties in arrears. Acknowledging the challenges posed by the pandemic, a delegation expressed the view that the Authority should organize its work so as to minimize the assessed contributions of States parties, embrace cost-effectiveness as a principle and follow a gradual approach in establishing and operationalizing organs and subsidiary bodies.

33. During the in-person meeting held on 9 December, the Meeting took note of the information reported by the Secretary-General of the Authority and of the statements made under the present item (item 9). The President of the thirtieth Meeting also congratulated the Secretary-General on his re-election.

34. In addition, during the deliberations under item 14 (see sect. VIII below) one delegation recalled the importance of the provisions of the Convention on the transfer of technology for developing States to be able to undertake the exploration for and exploitation of deep-sea minerals.

VI. Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf

A. Information reported by the Chair of the Commission

35. The Chair informed the Meeting in his written statement² that the members of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf had conducted a thorough evaluation of the feasibility of advancing the work of the Commission by means other than in-person meetings at United Nations Headquarters and faced challenges that were beyond their control, owing to the specific nature of the work of the Commission. Those challenges included the confidential nature of the data and information in the submissions, inadequate conditions for the full participation of all members of the Commission in remote work, the need to ensure the integrity of the process of examination of submissions and adherence to the rules of procedure and practice of the Commission, and the fair and equal treatment of all active submissions. The Chair stated that the members of the Commission planned to continue to work intersessionally and to seek possible solutions for the remote consideration of submissions, including in consultation with submitting States, should the pandemic continue to prevent in-person meetings in 2021.

36. The Chair expressed the hope that the comprehensive study prepared by the Secretariat at the request of the twenty-ninth Meeting of State Parties on possible options to address the working conditions of the Commission, including its funding, (SPLOS/30/11) would assist States parties in agreeing on sustainable and permanent solutions, which would be particularly important before the election of members of the Commission in 2022.

37. In their written statements,² many delegations expressed appreciation and support for the work of the Commission, commending its progress in the fulfilment of its mandate, despite its heavy workload, the ongoing vacancy and other challenges. Several delegations highlighted the high quality of scientific exchange and cooperation between the Commission and submitting States during the consideration of submissions. Several delegations conveyed congratulations to Adnan Rashid Nasser al-Azri on his election as Chair and appreciation to his predecessor, Yong Ahn Park, for his leadership during his term. One delegation expressed the hope that the Commission would continue to adhere strictly to its rules of procedure and exercise prudence in dealing with submissions involving disputes.

38. Many delegations expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Commission to seek potential solutions for the consideration of submissions by means other than

in-person meetings to overcome the challenges posed by the pandemic. In this connection, the importance of ensuring the health and safety of all members, the integrity and confidentiality of the deliberations of the Commission and adherence to its rules of procedure was underscored.

39. Several delegations expressed concern that the waiting time between the making of a submission and the establishment of a subcommission had increased to approximately 11 years and was expected to increase further. One delegation expressed the view that the increase in the workload of the Commission reflected the high expectations of the international community with regard to the Commission.

40. Some delegations mentioned their contributions or pledges to the voluntary trust fund for the purpose of defraying the cost of participation of the members of the Commission from developing States in the meetings of the Commission.

41. In a written statement,² the Deputy Director in charge of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea indicated that, since the twenty-ninth Meeting, that trust fund had received contributions from Canada, China, France, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, Portugal and the Republic of Korea, and that further contributions from Iceland and Japan were forthcoming. The balance of the fund, as at 22 October 2020, was approximately \$274,000 after funds had been allocated for assistance in respect of seven members of the Commission during its fiftieth session, and six members during its fifty-first and fifty-second sessions. The projected funding required to cover the costs of participation of seven members was approximately \$145,000 per session, plus programme support costs. Without additional contributions, it would not be possible for the fund to ensure financial assistance beyond the following session. In addition, funds would not be sufficient to reimburse the premium cost of the Headquarters medical insurance scheme, medical travel insurance or short-term medical insurance, notwithstanding the authorization contained in paragraphs 105 and 106 of General Assembly resolution 74/19.

42. With regard to the voluntary trust fund for the purpose of facilitating the preparation of submissions to the Commission for developing States, in particular the least developed countries and small island developing States, and compliance with article 76 of the Convention, since the twenty-ninth Meeting, six developing States had received assistance to cover the travel and daily subsistence allowance costs associated with meetings of the Commission and its subcommissions. As at 22 October, the balance of the fund available for disbursement was approximately \$409,000.

43. During the in-person meeting held on 9 December, the Meeting took note of the information reported by the Chair of the Commission and provided by the Secretariat, as well as of the statements made under the present item (item 10 (a)). The President also congratulated Mr. Al-Azri on his election as Chair of the Commission.

44. In addition, during the deliberations under item 14 (see sect. VIII below), some delegations expressed support for a study on how to adapt the work of the Commission to the challenges posed by the pandemic while ensuring strict observation of its confidentiality rules.

B. Conditions of service of members of the Commission

45. On 7 December 2020, the Co-Coordiators of the Open-ended Working Group on the Conditions of Service of the Members of the Commission, Sidney Gregory Kemble (Netherlands) and María Alejandrina Sande (Uruguay), submitted a report on the work of the Working Group to the President, who circulated it on the same date.

46. In that report, they recalled that, on 18 November 2019, one of the Co-Coordiators had met with the members of the Commission to review the

comprehensive survey on the conditions of service of the members and the costs defrayed by nominating States. The results of the survey had been considered by the Working Group on 20 November 2019. The Co-Coordination had planned to meet with the members of the Commission following the issuance of the study by the Secretariat (SPLOS/30/11), but this had not been possible owing to the pandemic.

47. On 9 November 2020, online consultations were held with the Chair and members of the Commission to exchange views and share information on the additional challenges experienced by the members of the Commission as a result of the pandemic and in preparation for the consideration of those matters by the Working Group during the thirtieth Meeting.

48. During the first round of online consultations of the Working Group, held on 20 November, some delegations sought clarifications regarding the options set out in the study by the Secretariat, while others expressed the view that further consideration of those options was required before any decisions could be drafted by the Working Group.

49. Some of the views expressed were that data security considerations were important for facilitating long-term remote work, in the light of the confidential nature of the work of the Commission.

50. During the second round of online consultations of the Working Group, held on 27 November, the Co-Coordination introduced a draft decision on the conditions of service of the members of the Commission. Some delegations reiterated the view that, under the Convention, State parties that had submitted the nomination of a member of the Commission must defray the expenses of that member while in performance of Commission duties. Concerns were raised that the options of funding through the regular budget of the United Nations and assessed contributions might not be in compliance with the Convention. Another delegation emphasized the role of the voluntary trust fund in supporting the participation of members from developing States. Some delegations supported a further study of the option of the payment of a fee; however, another delegation expressed concern about the retroactive application of that option for those States that had already received recommendations and about the negative impact that it could have on developing States with submissions pending. While there was agreement that a further study providing factual information on the various costs involved could assist the Meeting in taking a decision on that matter, some delegations cautioned that such a study should not pre-empt decisions to be taken by States parties.

51. Subsequently, the Co-Coordination circulated a revised draft decision for consideration, and comments were received from one delegation. Owing to the limited time frame under which the consultations were conducted, the Co-Coordination proposed that the Working Group continue its consultations intersessionally.

52. During the in-person meeting held on 9 December, one delegation proposed that the term of office of the members of the Commission be extended by one year, to offset the impact of the pandemic on pending submissions (see also para. 53 below). Thereafter, the Meeting took note of the information reported by the Co-Coordination and of the statements made under the present item (item 10 (b))² and requested that the Open-Ended Working Group continue to work intersessionally and report to the thirty-first Meeting.

53. In addition, during the deliberations under item 14 (see sect. VIII below), the proposal to extend the mandate of the current Commission by one year, without setting a precedent for the future, was reiterated.

C. Filling of a vacancy in the Commission

54. The Group of Eastern European States informed the Meeting in a written statement² that no nominations had been identified to fill the remaining seat in the Commission allocated to the Group, and that it would continue its efforts to identify a candidate as early as possible.

55. During the in-person meeting held on 9 December, the Meeting took note of the aforementioned statement and decided that the Secretary-General would circulate a call for nominations with a view to conducting a by-election for the vacant seat at the thirty-first Meeting of States Parties, provided that the President received information from the Group of Eastern European States about potential candidates at least 14 weeks before the commencement of that Meeting and that, in the absence of such information, the Meeting would revert to the consideration of that matter under the item “Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf”.

56. In addition, during the deliberations under item 14 (see sect. VIII below), additional statements were made with regard to that matter, and concerns were expressed about the ongoing vacancy, with several delegations urging that the issue be resolved as soon as possible, through either the nomination of a candidate or alternative solutions.

VII. Consideration of administrative and budgetary matters of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea

A. Report on budgetary matters for the financial periods 2017–2018 and 2019–2020

57. The Registrar of the Tribunal introduced in a written statement² the report on budgetary matters for the financial periods 2017–2018 and 2019–2020 ([SPLOS/30/3](#)), covering the matters outlined below.

1. Cash surplus for the financial period 2017–2018

58. The Registrar outlined the information contained in section I of the report, highlighting, in particular, that, as at 31 December 2019, the cash surplus for the financial period 2017–2018 stood at €2,956,912 and would be surrendered and deducted from the contributions of States parties for 2021. She underscored the importance of timely payments of contributions by States parties, failing which the Tribunal could be faced with a problem of liquidity and would have to make use of the Working Capital Fund.

59. Several delegations noted in their written statements² that total expenditure for the financial period 2017–2018 represented only 87.5 per cent of the total appropriations, and expressed appreciation for the fact that this was due, in part, to the cost-effective management of two cases.

2. Provisional performance report for 2019

60. In her written statement,² the Registrar outlined the information contained in section II and annex II to the report, highlighting, in particular, that the total expenditure for 2019 provisionally stood at €10,379,567, representing 96.55 per cent of the appropriations allocated for that year. She also pointed out that, on the basis of the budget performance as at the end of September 2020, taking into account the effects of the pandemic, the expected overexpenditure in two budget lines under section 1, Judges, in 2019, could now be compensated with transfers between appropriation sections, so that it would no longer be necessary to use the 2017–2018 cash surplus for that purpose.

61. Several delegations expressed appreciation for the fact that, despite increased expenses caused by developments beyond the control of the Registrar for the financial period 2019–2020, the overexpenditure could be compensated with transfers between appropriations sections. One delegation, however, requested more details in that regard. The decision to surrender the resultant cash surplus and deduct it from the contributions of States parties for 2021 was supported by several delegations. Several delegations commended the Registrar for the sound budget management and encouraged continued efforts in the effective and efficient use of financial resources based on sound budget principles and a zero-growth approach. Several delegations also called upon all States parties to honour their commitments and pay contributions in full and on time.

62. Responding to the question relating to the overexpenditure under section 1, Judges, in the 2019–2020 budget, the Registrar noted that the overexpenditure was to be lower than expected (approximately €130,000), given the shortening of the forty-ninth session and the holding of the fiftieth session in a hybrid format as a result of the pandemic. This lower overexpenditure could now be compensated with funds from section 2, Judges' pension scheme, owing to expected savings, including the re-election of two judges, and section 5, Official travel, owing to travel restrictions as a result of the pandemic.

3. Report on action taken pursuant to the Financial Regulations and Rules of the Tribunal

63. With reference to section III of the report, regarding the investment of funds of the Tribunal, the trust fund for the law of the sea, the Nippon Foundation trust fund and the workshop for legal advisers (sponsored by the Republic of Korea), one delegation recalled its financial contributions to support the launch and operation of the new capacity-building programme for legal advisers, which was welcomed by several other delegations.

64. During the in-person meeting held on 9 December, the Meeting took note, with satisfaction, of the report on budgetary matters for the financial periods 2017–2018 and 2019–2020, as well as of the statements made under the present item (item 11 (a)).

B. Appointment of an auditor for the financial years 2021–2024

65. In a written statement,² the Registrar presented document [SPLOS/30/4](#) relating to the appointment of an auditor for the financial years 2021–2024 and drew attention to the quotations of five audit firms contained therein.

66. Several delegations noted in their written statements² that all five quotations met the requirements for performing the audit of the accounts of the Tribunal, and since the firm BDO was the lowest of the five offers, there was a proposal that the thirtieth Meeting appoint BDO as the auditor for the following four years.

67. During the in-person meeting held on 9 December, the Meeting took note of the reported information and of the statements made under the present item (item 11 (b)) and decided, taking into account the quotations and proposal received, to appoint the accounting firm BDO as auditor for the financial years 2021–2024.

C. Draft budget proposals of the Tribunal for the financial period 2021–2022

68. The Open-ended Working Group on Financial and Budgetary Matters chaired, on behalf of the President, by the Vice-President, Ibrahima Toure (Côte d’Ivoire), met online on several occasions to review the proposed budget of the Tribunal for the period 2021–2022 ([SPLOS/30/5](#)) and make recommendations to the Meeting. The report of the Vice-President was circulated to delegations on 7 December.

69. In his report, the Vice-President indicated that the Registrar had noted that the budget proposals regarding recurrent expenditure followed an overall zero-growth approach compared with the equivalent value in euros of the budget for the period 2019–2020. She had drawn attention to parameters beyond the control of the Tribunal, which had resulted in increases, including a rise in daily subsistence allowance for Hamburg, Germany, revisions to the post adjustment multiplier for that city, higher estimates relating to staff costs based on standard costs, and the rise in the exchange rate of the United States dollar to the euro. Furthermore, the Registrar had underlined that the proposed budget for case-related costs was €1,810,600 higher than the appropriation approved for the period 2019–2020 owing to the expected volume of judicial work during the forthcoming budget period with two merits cases on the Tribunal’s docket. Overall, she had noted that the proposed budget in the amount of €24,155,000 represented an increase of €3,633,800 compared with the budget approved for the 2019–2020 period.

70. The Vice-President also reported that, in the ensuing discussions, and through statements circulated in writing, several delegations had expressed their appreciation for the sound financial management of the Tribunal and its efforts to streamline its budget through cost optimization and reduction and had acknowledged that the overall budget increase compared with the budget for the period 2019–2020 was due to parameters beyond the control of the Tribunal.

71. Subsequently, on the basis of the report of the Vice-President and the recommendations of the Open-ended Working Group, the President circulated draft decisions on budgetary matters of the Tribunal for the period 2021–2022, for adoption at the in-person meeting held on 9 December.

72. At that meeting, the Meeting took note of the information reported by the Vice-President and of the statements made under the present item (item 11 (c)) and adopted a decision ([SPLOS/30/17](#)) in which it approved the amount of €24,155,000 for the budget of the Tribunal for the financial period 2021–2022, which corresponded to the budget proposed by the Tribunal in annex I to document [SPLOS/30/5](#), as amended in document [SPLOS/30/5/Add.1](#).

D. Amendments to the Financial Regulations of the Tribunal

73. In a written statement,² the Registrar presented document [SPLOS/30/6](#) on proposed amendments to the Financial Regulations of the Tribunal, which were necessitated by the implementation of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards, and several delegations made written statements² supporting those amendments.

74. During the in-person meeting held on 9 December, the Meeting took note of the aforementioned statements and adopted a decision (SPLOS/30/16) in which it approved the amendments to the Financial Regulations, which would become effective on 1 January 2021 and apply to the financial period 2021 and subsequent financial periods.

75. The President congratulated the Registrar of the Tribunal on her election.

VIII. Reports of the Secretary-General under article 319 for the information of States parties on issues of a general nature, relevant to States parties, which have arisen with respect to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

76. During the in-person meeting held on 9 December, the Meeting considered the annual reports of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea ([A/74/350](#), [A/75/70](#) and [A/75/340](#)) that had been submitted to States parties pursuant to article 319 of the Convention since the twenty-ninth Meeting. In addition, the Meeting had before it a letter dated 6 October 2020 from the Secretary-General of the United Nations addressed to the President of the thirtieth Meeting ([SPLOS/30/15](#), annex).

77. Delegations expressed appreciation to the Secretary-General and the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for the useful and comprehensive reports.

78. Some delegations reaffirmed that the Convention set out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out and underlined the universal and unified character of the Convention and its role as a “constitution for the oceans”. Some delegations underscored the contribution of the Convention to maintaining international peace and security, settling disputes peacefully, enhancing friendly relations among all States, protecting and preserving the marine environment and strengthening the rule of law in the oceans and seas.

79. Some delegations recalled that the Convention struck a balance between the sustainable use of the oceans and seas and the protection of the marine environment and conservation of marine living resources. Some delegations also noted that many of the current challenges facing the oceans and seas could be addressed through the effective and comprehensive implementation of the Convention, including through the effective efforts of global and regional organizations, as well as sectoral bodies.

80. In other interventions, some delegations highlighted the importance of the Convention for, and their commitment to, the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 14. The contribution that the peaceful settlement of disputes made to Goal 14 was emphasized. Some delegations expressed the concern that the pandemic was hindering efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Goal 14. Some delegations highlighted the various impacts of the pandemic on ocean-related activities and processes, the marine environment and people at sea. In this context, delegations highlighted the importance of a sustainable ocean economy in the post-pandemic economic recovery.

81. Some delegations underlined the importance of the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity, as well as the important role of the Convention in this regard. Several delegations expressed support for the ongoing work of the intergovernmental conference on an international legally binding instrument under the Convention on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, including its intersessional work.

82. The importance of building scientific knowledge and research capacity and ensuring technology transfer was highlighted. Some delegations pointed to the actions

that their countries had taken, including in relation to scientific data collection and ocean observations. The critical role of ocean science in the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources, including in the context of Goal 14, was highlighted by some delegations. Those delegations also drew attention to the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030).

83. A delegation expressed concern over the impacts of the pandemic on the well-being of seafarers, including the issue of crew change, expressing support for facilitating crew changes in a manner that safeguarded the health of the public as well as that of ship crew.

84. Several delegations highlighted the challenges that climate change posed to coastal communities and marine ecosystems, recalling recent events that had affected coastal communities in their countries and calling for concerted global action to counter climate change. Several delegations emphasized that sea-level rise constituted a serious challenge, in particular for developing coastal States, and noted the importance of the effective implementation of the Convention in resolving this and other issues facing the oceans. A number of delegations welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on sea-level rise and its impacts ([A/75/70](#)). A delegation stated that any solution to sea-level rise should be based on international law, including the Convention, and should contribute to ensuring the stability and certainty of maritime boundaries.

85. A delegation highlighted the importance of the ocean-climate nexus for archipelagic and island States and noted an initiative to integrate ocean issues into the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as the establishment of a forum for archipelagic and island States to discuss these and other issues.

86. Several delegations noted the urgent need to address other challenges to the marine environment, including marine pollution, ocean acidification, the destruction of marine habitats, the degradation of hydrographic basins, seabed mining, overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, the loss of marine biodiversity, unregulated aquaculture and anthropogenic underwater noise.

87. Some delegations noted the establishment of a group of friends to combat marine plastic pollution on World Oceans Day in 2020. Delegations expressed the commitment of their countries to protecting a minimum of 30 per cent of marine and coastal areas through marine protected areas by 2030.

88. A delegation drew attention to a recent environmental disaster along a large section of its country's coastline, caused by a crude oil spill from a so-called "dark ship" that had purposely sought to avoid detection. The delegation expressed concern that the effective implementation of the Convention was being impaired by the refusal of some vessels, including those flying the flags of States parties, to cooperate with the tracking systems of coastal States when passing through maritime zones. The delegation sought support for better regulation of international shipping to ensure maritime safety and security, conserve the marine environment and prevent environmental disasters.

89. With regard to overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, some delegations described measures that their countries had taken to combat such fishing, including the ratification of the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing, strengthened cooperation with existing regional fisheries management organizations and the development and implementation of national legal and policy frameworks in line with international standards.

90. A delegation welcomed the progress towards the conclusion of a substantive and effective code of conduct in the South China Sea, in line with international law, including the Convention, but expressed concern about recent developments that

could undermine peace, security and stability in the region. The delegation called upon all States to refrain from escalating tensions and militarization and to resolve disputes concerning maritime claims peacefully and in accordance with international law, including the Convention.

91. With regard to the Black Sea, the Sea of Azov and the Strait of Kerch, one delegation stated that it had sought to resolve peacefully its dispute with another State party that had violated its rights under the Convention, as well as other rules and principles of international law, by preventing it from exercising its maritime rights, in particular through the exploitation of living and mineral resources and by interfering with the navigation of vessels. The delegation recalled that the General Assembly had called upon the relevant State to avoid the militarization of parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov and not to impede the lawful exercise of navigational and other rights. Another delegation, in the exercise of its right of reply, expressed the view that the Meeting was not the appropriate forum to discuss such matters, as its mandate was restricted to administrative, financial and procedural issues. That delegation stated that it enjoyed sovereign rights in the maritime areas concerned and that it exercised its jurisdiction and regulated the safe passage of ships and other activities, including the mining of resources, in compliance with its obligations under international law.

92. Several delegations stressed the importance of capacity-building, the sharing of marine scientific knowledge and the transfer of marine technology to ensure the effective implementation of the Convention, in particular for developing countries, including middle-income countries and landlocked developing countries. In this connection, a delegation also called for the effective implementation of part X of the Convention on the right of access of landlocked States to and from the sea and freedom of transit.

93. The observer delegation of the International Maritime Organization informed the Meeting of developments with respect to its work in the field of safety at sea and the protection of the marine environment, including with regard to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from ships. It drew attention to the entry into force of new sulphur limits in ship fuel oil and to an amendment to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by the Protocol of 1978 relating thereto, and as further amended by the Protocol of 1997 to prohibit the carriage of non-compliant fuel oil. It also underscored the challenges of the global shipping industry with regard to seafarers, noting its recommendations on measures to facilitate ship crew changes in seaports during the pandemic, as well as General Assembly resolution 75/17 of 1 December 2020, in which, inter alia, the Assembly had urged Member States to designate seafarers and other marine personnel as key workers and called upon Governments to promptly implement relevant measures designed to facilitate maritime crew changes.

94. The Meeting took note of the views expressed by delegations under the present item (item 14) and decided to include the same item in the provisional agenda of its thirty-first Meeting.

IX. Other matters

A. Practice of the Secretary-General with respect to the deposit of charts and lists of geographical coordinates of points under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

95. In a written statement,² the Deputy Director in charge of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea introduced the note prepared by the Secretariat at the

request of the twenty-ninth Meeting (SPLOS/30/12). Two written statements from delegations were received in respect to that matter.

96. A delegation proposed that, in the interest of transparency, maritime zone notifications be issued for all communications received by the Secretary-General, including those in response to a deposit. The delegation also expressed the view that States parties should be consulted before the publication of *Guidelines on deposit with the Secretary-General of charts or lists of geographical coordinates under the Convention* (see General Assembly resolution 74/19, para. 363). In that regard, only information required under the Convention should be deposited, and there should be clear guidelines on the use of the Maritime Limits and Boundaries Product Specification (S-121).³ The delegation also requested reconsideration of the recommendation contained in paragraph 30 (e) of the note by the Secretariat, relating to formatting lists of geographical coordinates of points in accordance with applicable technical standards, since, in the view of that delegation, the S-121 standard was currently a test version and guidelines for its implementation for deposit information had not been established yet.

97. In the other statement received, the view was expressed that, while nothing prevented non-parties from providing information to the Division, such information should be addressed to it and not to the depositary of the Convention and kept separate from the publication of charts and lists of geographical coordinates of points deposited under the Convention by States parties to it. This would avoid blurring the distinction between the rights and obligations of States parties stemming from the Convention and the mere provision of information by non-parties.

98. In a written statement, the Deputy Director in charge of the Division took note of the statements made by delegations and assured the Meeting that the views and comments expressed by delegations would be given due consideration in the preparation of the *Guidelines*.

99. During the in-person meeting held on 9 December, the Meeting took note of the note by the Secretariat on the practice of the Secretary-General in respect of the deposit of charts and lists of geographical coordinates of points under the Convention, as well as of the statements made under the present item (item 15).

B. Trust funds

100. The Deputy Director in charge of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea provided written information on the current status of the voluntary trust funds established by the General Assembly that were administered by the Division. He expressed appreciation to donor States for their generous contributions but noted that most of the trust funds continued to be chronically underfunded.

101. During the in-person meeting held on 9 December, the Meeting took note of the information on trust funds and fellowships provided by the Secretariat. The President renewed the appeal to delegations in a position to do so to contribute to the trust funds and fellowships administered by the Division.

102. Also during the in-person meeting, gratitude was expressed to the former Director of the Division, Gabriele Goettsche-Wanli, who had retired, for her contribution to the work of Division.

³ This product specification (available at <https://iho.int/en/standards-and-specifications>) was developed by the International Hydrographic Organization in response to a request of the General Assembly, first reflected in its resolution 59/24 of 17 November 2004.